



European Commission

Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

27th November 2019

Dear Mrs Von der Leyen,
President of the European Commission,

On Monday 14th October 2019 the Spanish Supreme Court made public the verdict on charges of sedition and embezzlement to the nine Catalan social and political leaders: almost 100 years, altogether, of prison. They organised, or helped the organisation of Catalonia's self-determination referendum of Sunday 1st October 2017.

Among the imprisoned political leaders, there are two former Members of the European Parliament, Mr Oriol Junqueras (13 years of prison) and Mr Raül Romeva (12 years of prison) as well as Mr Quim Forn (former Interior Minister, 10 years and 6 months), Mr Jordi Turull (former Catalan Government spokesperson, 12 years), Ms Dolors Bassa (former Welfare Minister, 12 years) and Mr Josep Rull (former Territory and Sustainability Minister, 10 years and 6 months).

The former Speaker of the Catalan Parliament, Ms Carme Forcadell, in prison since March 2018 for allowing the debates in the Catalan Parliament is also condemned to 12 years. Moreover, the social leaders of the biggest Catalan civil society organisations, Mr Jordi Cuixart and Mr Jordi Sànchez (both 9 years and 6 months), have also been convicted of sedition. Most of them had been almost 2 years in prison.

2.3 million people went to the ballot box on 1st October 2017. Among them, 1066 people were injured by the Spanish Police and Guardia Civil. Human Rights Watch¹ stated that the "Spanish police engaged in excessive force". The World Organisation Against Torture² condemned the increased repression and stigmatisation of defenders of the rights of people and the "excessive use of force to disperse peaceful protests" and in 22nd November 2018 called for the immediate release of Jordi Sànchez and Jordi Cuixart.

On 25th May 2019, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention³ called for the immediate release of political prisoners, urged that Spain should investigate the arbitrary decision to deny bail to the

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/12/spain-police-used-excessive-force-catalonia>

² <https://www.omct.org/monitoring-protection-mechanisms/urgent-interventions/spain/2018/11/d25127/>

³ https://www.ara.cat/2019/05/29/NNU_PrEsp_DDHH_2019_05_25_La_detencion.pdf?hash=60192f40885757a996b815ae40fa965742455fec

political prisoners and give them a chance to seek compensation. The answer of the Spanish Government was to deny the legitimacy of the report.

Moreover, International Human Rights organizations such as FIDH and Euromed rights that monitored the trial have denounced procedural shortcomings and lack of guarantees for the defendants⁴, and the International Commission of Jurists denounced that the Court ruling violates Human Rights⁵. Finally, the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme⁶ stated on 14th October 2019 that the trial against the political prisoners had been “political”.

This European internal affair should count on a solution led by Europe. Europe's leaders should not remain silent on this matter when they do not remain silent on matters concerning other Member States. If Europe cannot defend human rights inside Europe it will lose its entire *raison d'être* and will have to cease lecturing other countries.

In this regard, the undersigning Members of the European Parliament call the European Commission to:

- 1) Act as a mediator or support an international mediation that would discourage unnecessary and excessive use of force and help both sides to find a political solution in Catalonia that respects the will of the people with the necessary changes in the Spanish legal system.
- 2) Ensure that human and fundamental rights are protected in Spain in order not to give a precedent that can be used by non-democratic countries.
- 3) Take note of the international organizations that have called for the release of prisoners and calls Spain to comply with international treaties.

⁴ <https://euomedrights.org/fr/publication/proces-des-independantistes-catalans-a-madrid-fidh-et-euomed-droits-denoncent-des-irregularites/>

⁵ https://www.icj.org/spain-conviction-of-catalonian-leaders-violates-human-rights/?fbclid=IwAR0R21F6HXRo7iJBjNqDtf_Q-tawn1-QBSIKQS4Iw91xAGECa6l-TIaUMM

⁶ <https://www.ldh-france.org/catalogne-les-libertes-politiques-mises-a-mal/>

Co-signatories

MEP Diana Riba (Greens/EFA) on behalf of MEP-elected Carles Puigdemont, Oriol Junqueras and Antoni Comín

MEP François Alfonsi (Greens/EFA)

MEP Christian Allard (Greens/EFA)

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MEP Petra De Sutter (Greens/EFA)

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MEP Catherine Rowett (Greens/EFA)

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